United Nations A/C.5/52/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
24 November 1997

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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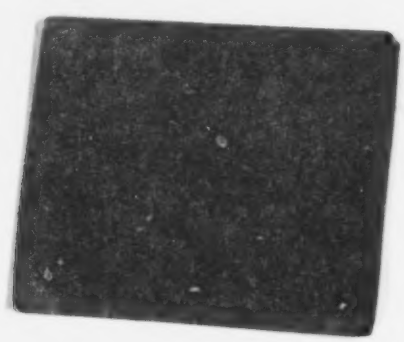

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 118: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*) (A/51/34, A/51/559 and Corr.1; A/52/34, A/52/206 and A/52/267)

1. **Mr. Othman** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) responding to points raised earlier by members of the Committee, said that he welcomed the comments and suggestions that had been made and was happy to note the Committee's recognition of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). The encouragement given by the Committee would help JIU to have a greater impact in the future. The comments concerning the need for effective oversight and therefore a stronger JIU were particularly appreciated, although in its report the previous year (A/51/34) the Unit had put the point differently: the need for better use and management of the available resources. Mindful of the financial constraints and the proposed reforms, the Unit had not asked for additional budgetary resources. However, it noted the view of some delegations that such negative budget growth must not be allowed to impair the Unit's work. In fact, there had been no increase in the JIU budget for the past decade or so. It hoped to rationalize its activities further in the future and to recruit better quality personnel.

2. Several Member States had taken an interest in the JIU work programme and its priorities for the current and next cycles. It would be concentrating on managerial, administrative and operational issues, but the work programme was flexible and could respond to the changing needs of the Member States and the participating organizations. The reporting cycle had been changed from January-December to July-June, and the time-frame was affected by the nature of the report: a report on a single organization might take only two months, while a system-wide report might take more than a year. It should also be noted that an inspector might be working on several reports at once.

3. On the question of the possible overlapping of the reports on the use of experts and consultants in the United Nations system and on the use of private management consulting firms, he pointed out that they were different in scope and focus. The former was geared to examining current policies and procedures for individual experts, while the latter dealt specifically with consultation on management issues and whether oversight machinery could help the Secretariat in its managerial tasks.

4. It had been suggested that the Unit might produce fewer reports. In theory, fewer reports would produce a greater impact and facilitate more detailed consideration by the Member States; on the other hand, fewer reports would seem to cost more. It had also been suggested that, since the JIU item was taken up biennially, its reports and work programme should be produced on a biennial basis. It must be remembered, however, that JIU was also responsible to the other participating organizations, which considered the item annually. It was for the Committee to take a decision on that point.

5. He could not add much concerning the Unit's inspectors and leadership in response to the question about the quality of its personnel and the skills required: it was up to the Member States to nominate and choose good inspectors. Furthermore, the statute of JIU invested its leadership with very limited discretionary authority. Its secretariat did need good research officers, in other words persons with a thorough understanding of the United Nations system, capable of carrying out research and analysis, familiar with the oversight literature, and having good technical skills, including a command of information technology. Members of the Committee had commented on the reader-friendliness of the reports, which had been produced by the Unit's skilled young research officers. It was also important for research officers not to limit themselves to information available within the United Nations system, but to go outside the system. The symposium at Montreux, for example, had been attended by representatives of all the participating organizations and of the private sector, and there had been a lively discussion on ways in which internal and external oversight services could help each other. On the specific question of skills, JIU needed a core staff but also called in short-term specialists as needed for specific topics. That issue tied in with the question of using extrabudgetary resources for dealing with certain topics.

6. The Unit did not have a problem with the recruitment of junior officers; it had recently recruited three, on the basis of its own screening, with excellent results. The problem was with the more senior Professional staff: some of them were not up to the job, but it would be difficult to replace them. JIU could recruit system-wide but such an approach met with practical difficulties.

7. Several delegations had raised questions about the use of information technology. In 1995 no inspector had had a computer workstation; now all the staff had workstations, and most of the inspectors were becoming skilled in information technology. JIU was negotiating, for example, with the International Computing Centre about going on-line with the other participating organizations. Such a move was not included in the budget proposal for the next biennium,

but the potential benefits would outweigh the costs. The Unit also had four General Service research assistants/information officers, whose function was to assist the inspectors and research officers. The quality of such staff needed to be upgraded so that the Unit would be less dependent on information supplied by the participating organizations and thus ease the burden on their secretariats. The transfer of staff from administrative to research activities would also help in that respect, once the computerized tracking system was in place. That exercise was an evolving one which required further refinement.

8. The standards and guidelines described in annex I of the 1996 report (A/51/34) had not been conceived in a vacuum but reflected the Unit's accumulated experience and the literature on the topic. Their application depended on the phase of the work: they were fully applied in the planning stage and during the preparation of the reports, but less fully during the inspections themselves when the topic in question and the persons with which the Unit was dealing had a considerable influence. In future the application of the standards and guidelines would be improved by means of internal controls in the Unit itself.

9. On the question of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, he said that JIU was entitled to comment on the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in accordance with resolution 48/218 E. The participating organizations also had internal oversight units, and JIU had made recommendations on them in the past in accordance with its mandate. The Unit had taken a broader approach to the Brindisi Base than OIOS and had linked it with the issues of the downsizing and closure of peacekeeping operations, since all the equipment at the Brindisi Base resulted from such downsizing and closures. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations also had an overall responsibility for the management of the Brindisi Base and the downsizing and closure of missions. JIU had asked a number of questions and had, in particular, sought clarification from the Secretariat about the measures apparently already taken in response to the recommendations of OIOS. The latter had itself expressed appreciation of the Unit's comments.

10. As to what JIU could do and what the Committee could do to increase the effectiveness of the oversight machinery, he hoped that it was apparent from the JIU reports and its programme of work, which had received favourable comment from many members of the Committee, that it had indeed tried to fulfil its part of the shared oversight responsibility. It could, of course, do better even within the available resources but hoped that increased resources would be forthcoming. In the past the Committee's discussion of the item had been rather general but at the current session, for the first time, its members had discussed the JIU reports in very specific terms. In addition, the reports were now taken up under the appropriate agenda items in other Main Committees and in the plenary Assembly. Moreover, the Member States were taking more action in response to the Unit's recommendations. It was a pity, in that connection, that the third partner in the shared responsibility - the other participating organizations - was not present, but he hoped that the Member States would send a clear message to their secretariats concerning the shared responsibility.

11. The proposed follow-up system did indeed look complicated at first sight. It had two parts, of which the tracking system itself was the most important. The other part related to the preconditions which had to be met by JIU itself, the Member States and the participating organizations. He hoped that the Committee would act on the recommendation.

12. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) reiterated his delegation's concerns about the ability of JIU to conduct comprehensive and methodologically sophisticated reviews.

13. Referring to the preliminary work programme for 1998-1999 (A/52/267, annex, para. 12), he said that, with regard to the proposed study on the United Nations performance appraisal system, his delegation would like to know what criteria of effectiveness would be used to evaluate the system and whether JIU would be able to obtain data on all evaluations. If it could not obtain such data, it should pursue other studies, since another opinion survey would not be of interest. With regard to the proposed evaluation of marketing of United Nations revenue-producing activities, it would like to know the planned scope and methodology for the study and sought an assurance that the Unit would not be duplicating the work of OIOS on the revenue-producing activities of the Postal Administration or the forthcoming evaluation of sales of materials of the Beijing Conference. With regard to the proposed study on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, it would again like to know what criteria would be used to measure the effectiveness of the activities.

14. Some of the reports listed in annex II to the 1997 JIU report (A/52/34) did not include recommendations and others simply provided information. For example, the feasibility study on the relocation of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the Turin Centre contained no recommendations, and the comparison of methods of calculating equitable geographical distribution within the United Nations common system described practices but

included no recommendations. Obviously, the implementation of such reports did not require monitoring. Other reports included recommendations which were too general to require action. In contrast, paragraph 4 of the tracking-system proposal set out in annex I to the report described recommendations containing well-crafted standards which could be implemented. Before focusing on a tracking system, JIU should concentrate on ensuring that its future reports met those standards. There might, however, be problems even when the recommendations could be implemented. For example, in order to track those recommendations that would require extensive consultation and coordination among the organizations of the system, JIU would have to establish data fields that reflected decision-making processes. The recommendations in the report on strengthening field representation of the United Nations system called for action by many actors: all organizations working at the field level, the host countries involved, and the donor community. In such cases follow-up would clearly not be a simple process. For example, he wondered how JIU would establish a realistic timetable for implementation. There appeared to be a critical omission in the tracking proposal in that it did not factor in the judgement of the persons responsible for the implementation of recommendations requiring complex coordination.

15. The Unit's apparent assumption that all recommendations had equal weight was particularly troubling. His delegation did not see how it could avoid establishing an order of priorities, particularly for recommendations that might have significant cost implications. For example, the report on coordination of policy and programming frameworks for more effective development cooperation, which had been well received by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), contained more than 20 recommendations, subsidiary recommendations or suggestions. To track only one of the more straightforward recommendations – the establishment of a data bank on development in each developing country – would require a very large commitment of resources. It would be impossible to track all the other recommendations since they implied actions by every organization involved in development. To ensure that action was taken and tangible results obtained, JIU needed to prioritize its recommendations. Those which promised to give the biggest return for the money spent needed to be identified. The recommendations would then carry greater weight than any resolution of a legislative body could confer.

16. **Mr. Othman** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) said that the first three reports mentioned by the representative of the United States were not included in the current programme of work but only in the preliminary work programme for 1998-1999. He could not give specific answers to all the questions because the reports were being handled by other inspectors and they were not yet at the implementation stage. He could, however, say that the report on the performance appraisal system would be confined to the United Nations Secretariat. The previous report on the subject had evaluated not only the appraisal systems as such but the way in which the successive systems had worked in practice. JIU had now been called upon to revert to the subject and establish how the Secretariat and the staff viewed the application of the latest system – whether it was easy to apply and, if not, what other ingredients needed to be added. The study on the marketing of revenue-producing activities had been suggested by two participating organizations. The report would be result-oriented and deal with the cost-effectiveness of such activities. Implementation of the feasibility study on the relocation of INSTRAW would depend on the reaction of the Second Committee to the JIU report on training institutes.

17. With regard to the proposed tracking system, the representative of the United States had put his finger on many of the issues which JIU itself had raised. His reference to paragraph 4 of the proposal was well taken, and it would be for the Member States themselves to decide whether JIU itself complied with the recommendations. It was true that it would be difficult to follow up the recommendations of the report on strengthening field representation since they were directed to a large number of actors. JIU felt, however, that follow-up would be possible if the tracking system was good enough. It was important to discover at an initial stage, before the recommendations were submitted to legislative bodies, whether they were accepted by the participating organizations. If they were accepted, the organizations should indicate which of its departments was responsible for carrying them out. Everything depended on the concept of shared responsibility. The Committee seemed to feel that JIU was playing its part in that respect. However, it could not work alone and needed the contributions of its partners. As he had said in his earlier statement, the preconditions had to be met by all the partners.

18. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its general discussion of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/52/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I), A/52/7 (Chap. II, Parts I and II) and A/52/16 and Add.1)

Section 1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination (*continued*)

19. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), responding to questions raised at the previous meeting, said, with regard to support provided for the President of the General Assembly, that the President was provided with a full-time spokesperson, a security officer, two drivers, secretaries and temporary assistance as and when required. Background information was provided by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division. The President was allocated a suite for himself or herself and staff, and there was a hospitality fund for official functions. It was proposed that the sum of $250,000 should be allocated annually, the modalities to be discussed with the current President each year.

20. With regard to the reclassification of the post of Executive Secretary of the Board of Auditors from the P-5 to the D-1 level, it was simply a return to the post's former status. Until four or five years previously it had been a D-1 post but it had been downgraded. That had not been a wise decision, given the responsibilities of the post. He noted that other comparable posts, such as that in the Joint Inspection Unit, were at the D-2 level.

21. As for the question of whether special envoys or representatives were included in the budget of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, he said that, since such posts were inevitably one-off, short-term appointments they could not be included in the budget. They were mentioned merely in fulfilment of the statutory requirement that the General Assembly should be informed of the status of such people on an annual basis.

22. **Ms. Peña** (Mexico) said that her delegation strongly endorsed the comments made in paragraph 61 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (A/52/16). It attached great importance to the work of that Committee.

23. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand) said that, while he welcomed the information regarding support for the President of the General Assembly, it would help delegations in considering the budget if in subsequent years the budget could contain a subsection dealing with that matter.

24. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba) said that her country attached particular importance to activities under section 1 and therefore felt deep concern about the reduction of resources in several areas. She would like to know, for example, on what grounds several posts were to be abolished or reclassified. It would be useful if such information could be provided in the form of a conference room paper so that delegations could have it before them during informal discussions. She also questioned the basis on which, according to the footnote to table 1.1, $3,459,000 had been transferred and how that transfer would be credited. In that connection, her delegation supported the remarks contained in paragraph I.5 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part I)). Her delegation supported the reclassification of the post of Executive Secretary of the Board of Auditors. With regard to CPC, her delegation fully supported its work and therefore considered that it should, as indicated in paragraph 1.33, of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1), hold a six-week meeting in 1998 and a four-week meeting in 1999.

25. With regard to executive direction and management, more information should be provided on the Office of External Relations in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and particularly on what its functions would be. Her delegation was also concerned about the suggestion (para. 1.44) that the Secretary-General should use outside expertise in a number of fields; some of the issues involved were sensitive matters, for which experts within the Organization should be used.

26. The Secretariat should also provide more information in writing on the standardized vacancy rates often mentioned in the presentation of the budget. Lastly, she wondered why the cost of office automation and other supplies and of official gifts presented by the Secretary-General to dignitaries appeared under supplies and materials (para. 1.49) rather that under hospitality (para. 1.48).

27. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh), speaking as coordinator of the least developed countries, welcomed the allocation of travel expenses for up to five representatives of the 48 Member States that were least developed countries; such an allocation would facilitate the participation of those countries in the work of the General Assembly.

28. His delegation also attached importance to the role played by CPC, which should therefore have adequate resources made available to it; in that context, $792,900 seemed a reasonable sum (para. 1.33). By the same token, CPC should indeed hold a six-week session in 1998 and a four-week session in 1999 in order to consider the budget outline and the mid-term plan.

29 The Secretary-General had, admittedly, a broad range of responsibilities, but $181,000 seemed an excessive sum

to spend on the services of outside experts in various fields. The matter was the subject of divergent views among delegations and unless it was adequately addressed in the informal consultations it might be difficult for the Committee to agree to the allocation of that sum.

30. He requested further information on the reclassification of two Executive Assistants of the Secretary-General from the D-1 to the D-2 level (para. 1.42). He wondered what additional functions the staff members concerned had assumed to justify the reclassification.

31. With regard to the replacement of the Secretary-General's official car (para. 1.40), efforts should be made to ensure the continuation of the existing loans for the biennium 1998-1999; that could save the Organization some $45,200. He also asked whether any regular replacement schedule was followed in that regard.

32. Lastly, he agreed with the comments by the representative of Thailand about support for the President of the General Assembly. It should not be a matter of providing temporary assistance; funding should be supplied on a regular basis.

33. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) shared the view expressed in paragraph 1.17 of the report of ACABQ (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part I)) that the sum of $181,000 requested for outside expertise was excessive. With regard to gratis personnel, he said that reductions in such personnel and in staff generally were interrelated and should be considered simultaneously. He hoped that the report on gratis personnel would be available shortly so that the Advisory Committee – and subsequently the Fifth Committee – could consider the matter in its entirety.

34. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the Advisory Committee and CPC had already been supplied with information concerning the Office of External Relations; that information could be made available for the Committee's informal discussions.

35. With regard to the vacancy rates, he thought that the matter had been explained during the introduction of the proposed programme budget, but if further elaboration was needed he would be happy to provide it.

36. On the question of the footnote to table 1.1, he said that, in the past, the relevant table had reflected the resources earmarked for a number of offices, such as the Department of Political Affairs. Since the matter concerned temporary assistance during the General Assembly, however, it had been thought preferable to show costs under the individual offices rather than under section 1 of the budget. The footnote was a reflection of that.

37. As for the question of why the items included in paragraph 1.49 had not been included in paragraph 1.48 instead, he said that the provision of such supplies was not strictly speaking hospitality, and in any case the layout reflected the usual procedure.

38. With regard to the reclassification of two posts in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General from the D-1 to the D-2 level, he pointed out that the Executive Office was smaller than it had been before. Previously there had been an Under-Secretary-General and an Assistant Secretary-General, but the Secretary-General considered that those posts were no longer required and that it would be preferable to have two Executive Assistants at the D-2 level.

39. As for the replacement of the Secretary-General's car, every effort was being made to continue the current arrangement. The budgetary allocation had been included in case the existing arrangements were inadequate. There were strict procedures governing the replacement of cars: they had to be at least five years old and to have travelled at least 80,000 miles.

40. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba), referring to her previous question, asked whether the posts proposed for abolition would be vacant and, if so, as of what date. If the information was not immediately available, her delegation would wish to be informed when it would be.

41. **Mr. Elmuntaser** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) drew attention to paragraph 1.8 of the report of the Advisory Committee, which indicated that the level of resources required by the Board of Auditors was determined by the Board itself. The question arose as to whether Member States were able to make any contribution to the determination or definition of the burdens borne by the Board of Auditors. With regard to the point made by the representative of Pakistan regarding the high cost of outside consultants, he believed that in-house consultants should be used wherever possible.

42. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the Board of Auditors was elected by the General Assembly and resources were allocated to it by the General Assembly: there was therefore no doubt that Member States could monitor the Board's activities.

43. With regard to the use of outside consultants, he said that there were no internal consultants; the proposal was that outsiders should be hired who had expertise which was lacking within the Organization.

44. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its general discussion of section 1 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Section 2. Political affairs

Section 3. Peacekeeping operations and special missions

Section 4. Peaceful uses of outer space

45. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's first report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part II)), said that section 2 would be affected by the proposals on reform contained in document A/51/950. The financial implications of the reform proposals were to be found in document A/52/303 and, as indicated in the information paragraph following paragraph II.22 of its report, the Advisory Committee would comment later on those implications. He drew the Committee's attention to paragraph II.4, relating to the decrease in established regular budget posts. The Advisory Committee's comments on the status of gratis personnel were to be found in paragraph II.6. He also drew attention, in particular, to paragraphs II.7, II.8-II.10, II.11, II.12, II.14 and II.16-II.19.

46. It was proposed that 37 posts should be cut under section 3. Although the Secretary-General's declared intention was to phase out gratis personnel, the implications of a phase-out were not apparent from the documents before the Advisory Committee; they should accordingly be clarified.

47. The Committee had experienced some difficulty in understanding how efficiency savings had been dealt with in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. Many of the savings were notional, and there had been no attempt to differentiate between savings in the regular budget and savings in the budgets for peacekeeping operations.

48. The Secretary-General had made no attempt to include resources for special missions funded from the regular budget which might be extended into the biennium 1998-1999. It would therefore be necessary for the Fifth Committee to recall how the funds for such missions were dealt with pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/213.

49. Regarding section 4, it was very apparent from additional information received by the Advisory Committee that the proposed programme of work would require more resources than would be available to implement it. The inefficient functioning of the programme of work was therefore inevitable.

50. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, introducing the relevant sections of that Committee's report (A/52/16), said that CPC recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narratives of sections 2 and 3, with some modifications as indicated in the report. With regard to section 3, the Committee had also made recommendations regarding the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and gratis personnel. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the programme narrative of section 4 without modifications.

51. **Mr. Maddens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, said that, in view of the central role which the maintenance of international peace and security played in the activities of the United Nations, it was a matter of concern that only 0.5 per cent of the Organization's total budget was allocated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Full-cost budgeting would be of great utility in funding that Department; it would make it possible for decisions to be taken on all the resources needed to finance mandated activities. Such decisions could then be based on information related to financing through the regular budget and the support account and the activities carried out by gratis personnel as provided for in resolution 51/243.

52. Referring to the General Assembly's decision to phase out gratis personnel, he said that the phase-out of such personnel should be conducted in an orderly fashion so as not to affect the delivery of programme activities. In that connection, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should produce a budget and restructuring plan which would take account of the need to retain a military planning capacity and peacekeeping management. The European Union hoped to receive further details of the phasing-out process in the near future, and at any event in reports on the support account and the first regular budget performance report for the biennium 1998-1999.

53. The European Union noted with satisfaction that the Advisory Committee had not sought to question the existence of the Lessons Learned Unit or the value of its work; at least partial financing of the Lessons Learned Unit and the Situation Centre should be provided through the regular budget.

54. The strengthening of the planning function at Headquarters was an urgent priority. In that connection, it was essential that the report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters should be issued as quickly as possible.

55. The European Union believed that the concept of special missions was a useful innovation in terms of applying resolution 41/213 to new mandates having to do with the maintenance of international peace and security. It was disappointed that the concept had not found acceptance.

56. **Ms. Duschner** (Canada) said that her delegation was concerned about the delay in the issuance of the report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters, and was frustrated that the creation of such a badly needed structure had become embroiled in the broader staffing and budgetary problems of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

57. **Mr. Kabir** (Bangladesh), referring to section 2, said that his delegation had noted the Secretary-General's proposal that the number of regional divisions in the Department of Political Affairs should be reduced from six to four. The Secretariat should explain exactly how such a reduction would contribute to efficiency.

58. According to the budget estimates, most of the resources earmarked for electoral assistance were to come from extrabudgetary sources. Efforts should be made to provide for as many electoral missions as possible through the regular budget.

59. His delegation had also noted a very large increase in funds earmarked for consultants and experts in the Security Council affairs subprogramme (A/52/6/Rev.1, para. 2.80). The "specialized services" mentioned in that connection should be listed in detail. Moreover, his delegation was not convinced of the need for the conversion of one P-4 post and two General Service temporary posts to established posts.

60. The current level of resources for decolonization and the question of Palestine should be maintained. In the latter case, his delegation found it difficult to accept the proposed abolition of a P-3 post (para. 2.110). The United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme (para. 2.128 (d)) should be continued so as to enable young diplomats from developing countries to familiarize themselves with various important disarmament issues.

61. With regard to section 3, he said that, as a major troop-contributor to peacekeeping operations, his country attached great importance to the effective functioning of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. His delegation regretted that the Secretary-General had been unable to provide for the full requirements of the Department, which had continued to rely on the support account and gratis personnel. Noting that $93,000 had been proposed to cover specialized consultancy services not readily available in the Secretariat (para. 3.19), he said his delegation wondered whether greater efforts might not be made to tap in-house skills. In addition, a very large amount had been set aside for the rental of photocopying machines; he suggested that it might be more cost-efficient to buy machines outright.

62. There was no justification for the proposal for the establishment of a Political Affairs Officer at the P-4 level to assist the Head of Mission of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) (para. 3.55). Nor did his delegation agree that such large amounts needed to be set aside for rental or replacement of communications and data-processing equipment and vehicles in connection with that mission. The Secretariat should justify those proposed expenditures.

63. **Mr. Saguier Caballero** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group supported the activities of the subprogramme on decolonization; in that connection, more resources should be allocated to support for the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples until it had completed its mandate. A proposal had been made that the substantive activities of that subprogramme should be maintained in the Department of Political Affairs while the Special Committee's secretariat services were transferred to a new budget section. The Rio Group hoped to receive a report on the programme-related and financial implications of such a transfer.

64. The Group also wished to reiterate its support for disarmament activities, which should continue to be reflected in the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The resources approved during the previous biennium for the Organization's disarmament activities should be maintained at the same level or increased.

65. With regard to peacekeeping operations, the Rio Group recognized that the maintenance of international peace and security was one of the Organization's essential activities. Such operations should not, however, be conducted at the expense of development activities. There was also a disturbing preponderance of gratis personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Finally, the Group wished to express its concern about the failure to submit estimates in respect of the resources required for activities which were mandated to continue during the coming biennium.

66. **Mr. Gjesdal** (Norway) said that the maintenance of international peace and security would continue to be a core priority of the United Nations during the coming biennium. It would therefore be necessary to further strengthen the Organization's backstopping capacity. Under the proposed

programme budget, over half of the staff required for peacekeeping operations and special missions would be financed from extrabudgetary resources. There would consequently be an increase in extrabudgetary posts compared with the previous biennium. His delegation believed that the maximum number of posts should be funded from the regular budget; that would reflect the importance which the international community attached to peacekeeping activities. A number of proposed temporary posts in the field of peacekeeping operations should therefore be made permanent. The Secretariat should state which additional core-function posts would be given priority if the funding to convert them to permanent posts were to be made available.

67. No provision had been included in the budget for special missions which currently lacked a legislative mandate. Such provision would constitute sound managerial and budgetary planning. A proposal to that effect had been put forward by the Secretary-General in the programme budget outline but had failed to garner the necessary approval. His delegation believed that the Fifth Committee should reconsider that decision.

68. **Mr. Chinvanno** (Thailand) said that the primary function of the Department of Political Affairs was to help the Secretary-General to focus on preventive diplomacy, which was ultimately the most cost-effective way of ensuring international peace and security. Given that it was proposed to reduce the number of regional divisions in the Department from six to four, his delegation sought assurances that that would have no adverse effect on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities.

69. His delegation believed that the disarmament subprogramme should remain wholly under section 2 of the programme budget.

70. **Ms. Shenwick** (United States of America) said that her delegation had two major concerns regarding section 3. First, the regular budget was being used to fund posts which were more closely associated with, or defined as, backstopping, whereas the support account was being used to fund posts which could be considered as having core functions. That anomaly had persisted for some time and her delegation failed to understand why the Secretariat had done nothing to regularize the situation so that the posts funded from the regular budget corresponded to core functions.

71. The second major issue which concerned her delegation was that, under the terms of the proposed programme budget, $56.8 million had been relinquished with the exception of resource requirements for the first three months of funding for the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). She would like an explanation. Her delegation was concerned that the Secretariat was taking funds which had been line-itemed for one activity and using them for something else.

72. Her delegation noted that some core functions were financed from the support account: the Secretariat should explain why it had not put forward proposals to transfer those functions to the regular budget within the overall level of posts currently proposed for section 3.

73. The continued use of gratis personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was to be welcomed. Such individuals contributed significantly to the effective operations of the Department and the skills which they brought to their work were not readily available in the international civil service.

74. Table 3.5 in the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1) reflected significant increases in the requirements for contractual services and for furniture and equipment compared to the previous biennium. The Secretariat should provide more detailed information on the nature of those expenditures. Given the reduction in peacekeeping activities, her delegation would have thought that there was plenty of surplus furniture available. Furthermore, in view of the figure of $52,700 for the translation of documents produced by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, she wondered why the translation could not be done in-house. With regard to the staff members accommodated in the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) building (para. 3.25), she said that her delegation would appreciate more information on the Secretariat's plans for the long-term use of the building.

75. It was important for the United Nations to look for ways to avoid duplication of effort. For example, a request had been made for a provision for a political affairs consultant to undertake a study to draw lessons from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of past operations (para. 3.19 (b)). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), had, however, undertaken and published an extensive study on that very subject in 1996.

76. Posts alone had been costed in the Office of Operations of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (para. 3.29); further details should be provided regarding the objects of expenditure associated with those posts. In the Field Administration and Logistics Division, the relationship between the regular budget and funding for the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi was unclear. In particular, the programme budget narrative seemed to suggest that funding for the Base was to come from section 3, which

would contravene the most recent General Assembly resolution on the matter. Furthermore, the narrative also seemed to suggest that the United Nations Supply Depot at Pisa would receive funding from the regular budget, yet it was the understanding of her delegation that the Depot had been closed.

77. Finally, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) had not been reviewed since 1966 and 1973 respectively. They should be subject to the same scrutiny and governance as other peacekeeping missions.

78. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's comments in connection with sections 2 and 3 regarding gratis personnel and consultants, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on those sections.

79. **Ms. Powles** (New Zealand), referring to section 2, said that her delegation had supported the efforts of the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization to ensure that appropriate emphasis continued to be given to the decolonization activities of the Department of Political Affairs. She therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's undertaking to that effect and did not believe that it was necessary to micromanage the Secretary-General's implementation of that undertaking.

80. **Ms. Buergo Rodriguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation was concerned about the reduction in resources for political affairs and the negative impact on the implementation of activities by the Department of Political Affairs. She requested clarification that resources would be sufficient to ensure the implementation of all mandates. She supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the proposal for the abolition of the regional disarmament centres (A/52/7, para. II.12, p. 2) should be drawn to the attention of the First Committee. She also requested additional information on that matter. The Disarmament Fellowship Programme should be retained in the upcoming biennium.

81. Her delegation recognized the important work of the Special Committee on decolonization and trusted that adequate resources would be provided to it. She noted with concern the backlog in the preparation of the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council and the Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs (para. 2.79); more resources should be provided. With regard to the reference in the Advisory Committee's report (para. II.19) to delays in the translation of certain publications, she asked why there was no reference to the Spanish and Russian versions.

82. She was concerned about the proposed abolition of 37 regular posts under section 3, and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC in that regard. She was also concerned about the increase in the use of gratis personnel and trusted that such personnel would be gradually eliminated. In general, her delegation was also concerned about the lack of resources for mandated activities which would be continued in the next biennium.

83. **Mrs. Emerson** (Portugal) said that her delegation attached great importance to the subprogramme on decolonization and the work of the Special Committee on decolonization. She welcomed the compromise that had been reached between the Chairman of the Special Committee and the Secretary-General.

84. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation was very concerned about the delays in the issuance of the Arabic and Chinese translations of the Repertoire and the Disarmament Yearbook noted by the Advisory Committee (A/52/7, para. II.19). His delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's view regarding the proposed abolition of one P-3 post under the subprogramme on the question of Palestine, and requested clarification.

85. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) requested further information on paragraphs II.5 and II.6 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/52/7). He noted that there had been a reduction in the number of disarmament fellowships as a result of resource constraints, and he hoped that adequate provision would be made in the upcoming biennium. The narrative on disarmament must be strictly in accordance with the mandates set out in the medium-term plan.

86. He requested the Secretariat's comments on the Advisory Committee's view that the Secretary-General should present proposals on total requirements from all sources of funding under section 3 (para. II.25). He also noted the proposal for the reduction of 72 posts under section 3 and the proposed provision for 134 gratis personnel. The proposed reductions in the staffing of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) must be scrutinized to ensure that their respective mandates were not affected. Proposed reductions should be justified in the same way as proposals for increases, and the Secretariat should explain how the proposed reductions would not affect mandated activities.

87. He noted the recommendation of CPC for the approval of an amended programme narrative for section 3 and its recommendation for congruity among mandates, resources and objectives in implementing peacekeeping mandates (A/52/16, paras. 85 and 86). CPC had also drawn attention

to the issue of gratis personnel and the need to review staffing issues for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in their entirety (para. 88).

88. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that his delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and the conclusions of the Advisory Committee on sections 2 and 3. He was concerned about the late issuance of the Arabic and Chinese translations of the Repertoire and Disarmament Yearbook. The Secretariat must take the necessary measures to ensure that translations into all official languages were issued in a timely manner. Lastly, he requested an explanation of the indication in paragraph 3.22 (d) of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1) that 26 personal computers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were obsolete.

89. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) noted the cost-cutting measures taken by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fortieth session. The costs of UNISPACE III must come from existing resources and voluntary contributions.

90. The existing resource level, if properly managed, was sufficient, and his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's view that all efforts should be made to keep the cost of UNISPACE III within existing resources (A/52/7, para. II.52). He requested an explanation of how resource growth of $13,200 for furniture and equipment under section 4 could previously have been included under section 26 G (Administration, Vienna), as well as an explanation of the increase of $45,700 for other staff costs, primarily general temporary assistance. The proposed resource growth of $136,400 for grants and contributions was unwarranted. He also requested an explanation of the Advisory Committee's view (para. II.51) that more had been programmed and more reports projected than could reasonably be implemented with the resources available.

91. **Mr. Saha** (India) asked whether the withdrawal of the Secretary-General's proposal for a P-4 post in respect of UNMOGIP would result in a commensurate reduction in travel.

92. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said, in connection with section 2, that the proposal to reduce the number of regional centres from six to four reflected the merger in the Department of Political Affairs of the two Asian Divisions and of the Americas and European Divisions in the interests of efficiency. The conversion of posts in that Department had been proposed on account of the sanctions committees. The posts had been created in 1983, and since the activities of the sanctions committees were continuing it was felt that they should now be converted to established posts.

93. The proposed abolition of one P-3 post under the subprogramme on the question of Palestine was a result of efforts to meet the General Assembly's call, two years earlier, for savings of $150 million. The incumbent had retired, and the Department had been able to manage without filling the post, which had remained vacant.

94. The proposal to restore the full amount that had existed in the biennium 1994-1995 for disarmament fellowships reflected their importance. The reduction in the biennium 1996-1997 had also been part of the efforts to meet the savings mandated by the General Assembly.

95. He would seek further information on the backlog affecting the publications referred to, but noted that priority was given to parliamentary documentation. The request for $26,000 in respect of consultancy service for the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council reflected the need for legal expertise which was not available in the Department of Political Affairs and which would not be needed on a permanent basis.

96. Regarding section 3, he said that no report on the establishment and financing of rapidly deployable mission headquarters would be issued in the near future. While the concept was generally accepted, it must be considered in the context of the overall evaluation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The question of the phasing out of gratis personnel and the impact on the support account would also be considered in that context. The Committee would receive further information in the proposals for the support account for the period July 1998-June 1999, to be submitted early in 1998.

97. The Secretariat had wished to make provisions for special missions in anticipation of mandates during the upcoming biennium, but the General Assembly had decided otherwise. It was in that context that the $56 million had been relinquished; it simply reflected a provision for special missions in the current biennium for which there was no mandate in biennium 1998-1999.

98. The request for consultancy services for demobilization reflected the lack of expertise within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; again, such expertise was not needed on a long-term basis.

99. With regard to equipment and vehicles, the Committee would note that the proposed programme budget did not contain all the relevant background information; such information was, however, made available to the Advisory Committee. Regarding subprogramme 1.1, on prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, both posts and related expenses were shown under that subprogramme. The regular

budget contained no funds for the Brindisi Base or the Pisa Depot in the current or upcoming biennium. Funding was entirely from extrabudgetary resources.

100. As for UNTSO and UNMOGIP, there had been a review some two or three years earlier which had resulted in significant streamlining and post reductions in the current biennium. The current proposals were a continuation of that exercise. There were no travel costs relating to the P-4 post proposed for abolition in UNMOGIP.

101. The increase in contractual services for the biennium 1998-1999 reflected the need for programme managers to make adjustments in that area during the current biennium, in the expectation that cuts would be restored in the following biennium.

102. The increase in office automation equipment under section 4 reflected the fact that such funding had previously been included under section 27, which would now show a corresponding decrease. A small amount for general temporary assistance had been requested to assist in preparations for UNISPACE III. Lastly, the classification of 26 personal computers as obsolete reflected the standard policy of replacing equipment over five years, with 20 per cent being replaced each year.

103. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Controller's replies in respect of UNTSO, Palestine and the delayed issuance of publications added nothing to the information contained in the documentation; a more convincing reply was required.

104. **Ms. Shenwick** (United States of America) said that the Secretariat seemed to have thought that it could use the amount of $56 million budgeted for peace and security for other purposes. That was a disturbing practice given the unique nature of budgeting in that area. The funds simply could not be used for some other purpose without a mandate.

105. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Tunisia) said that his delegation was also not convinced by the Secretariat's answers.

106. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the budget outline had contained a request for $70 million for unforeseen but anticipated special missions in 1998-1999. The General Assembly had rejected that request. It had approved an outline of $2.48 billion; the budget proposals totalled $2.479 billion and thus complied fully with the General Assembly's requirements.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.